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No room for neutrality?

The uncommitted European nations and the economic Cold War in the 1950s

Niklas Jensen-Eriksen

When the United States and its leading Western European allies decided at the end of the 1940s to limit exports of strategic raw materials, products, and technology to communist countries, this policy came into conflict with the desire of many non-communist European countries not to take part in the East-West conflict. Many of these nations were also eager to trade with Eastern Europe. In this chapter, we explore the role of neutral countries in the context of Western embargo. Such an exercise was last completed in 1968, although many scholars have since looked at individual countries. We seek answers to a few interrelated key questions: How did the Western alliance, and in particular the United States, try to incorporate Austria, Switzerland, Sweden, Finland, and Ireland within the Western alliance's export control system, usually known as the CoCom?¹ How did these neutral countries respond? How successful were the Americans and their allies in their efforts?

According to Harto Hakovirta, "the most reliable indicators of a political actor's real policies, or at least its freedom of action, are the choices it makes in dilemmatic

test conditions and situations.”² The establishment of CoCom created this kind of dilemma to the neutrals, but whether or not they were incorporated within the embargo is also significant for wider European history. Michael Mastanduno, one of the leading authorities on the history of CoCom, has stated that “export control policies and their coordination in CoCom have been an integral part of the postwar international system.”³

As Bengt Sundelius highlighted, there are two ways of studying European neutrality: one can do so in an idiosyncratic fashion by studying and emphasizing the specific characteristics of individual countries or one can treat the neutral countries as a group, and try to establish general patterns and structures among them.⁴ The idiosyncratic approach has been considerably more popular among the students of neutrality,⁵ and certainly there were differences between the neutral countries. The Swiss and Swedish foreign policies were based on long traditions of neutrality. Austria declared itself neutral in 1955, when the independent Austrian state was re-established after a long period of occupation by US, British, French, and Soviet troops. In the Finnish case, the closeness of the Soviet Union and the latter’s influence on Finnish affairs forced the small country to refrain from actions that the Soviets might find objectionable. Ireland, in turn, was located far from the frontlines of the Cold War and was eager to emphasize its independence vis-à-vis the United Kingdom.⁶

In this chapter, I will adopt the second approach, because I am arguing that, in the context of the Western export control policies, similarities were more important than the differences. In all cases, the US government feared that the neutrals could undermine Western policies by exporting or re-exporting strategic goods to the Eastern bloc, and hence the Americans pressured these countries to limit trade with communist countries. The neutrals, with the partial exception of Ireland,⁷ tried to defend their right not to participate in the Western economic embargo against the communist bloc, but all eventually gave up.

It has to be underlined that the neutral countries did not act as a group in the same way that the NATO or Eastern bloc members often did.⁸ In this article, “the neutrals” is used as conceptual category to describe countries that, in public, did their best to

underline that they did not belong to either of the two alliances (US-led NATO and the Soviet-led Eastern bloc).

The only scholar who has looked at the role of all non-communist neutral European countries together in the context of Western embargo was Gunnar Adler-Karlsson. In 1968, he published the first comprehensive book on the CoCom, in which he also discussed the role of the neutrals.⁹ Adler-Karlsson did not have access to confidential government documents, and often had little information on what was going on behind the scenes.¹⁰ Since the late 1980s, many scholars have been able to access previously closed collections. Therefore, this chapter is able to draw on a number of significant works that have looked at individual countries or groups of countries. These include Birgit Karlsson's and Mikael Nilsson's works on Sweden,¹¹ André Schaller's and Klaus Ammann's on Switzerland,¹² Till Geiger's on Ireland,¹³ Niklas Jensen-Eriksen's on Finland,¹⁴ and Hendrik Roodbeen's Ph.D. thesis, which looks at a number of small allied or neutral countries, including Switzerland and Austria.¹⁵ In addition, information for this chapter has been collected from US, British, Swedish, and Finnish archives, as well as from the archives of CoCom, which are located in Paris, France.

Compromising neutrality

During the Cold War decades, the European states were commonly divided into three groups. First, there were those that had joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and hence had established a close political and military alliance with the US. Second, there were countries that formed what outsiders often called the "Eastern" or "Soviet" bloc and, since 1955, were members of the Warsaw Pact. Third, there were countries that had joined neither of these two competing alliances, and had professed their willingness to stay neutral in the Cold War, which could at any time escalate into a World War III.

Some contemporary observers were not impressed by the statements made by the leaders of these countries. For example, Harto Hakovirta argued in 1988, in what became a classic study on this subject, that "European neutrality has suffered from an inherent and chronic problem of credibility since the emergence of the East-West conflict."¹⁶ He and some other scholars pointed out that, in ideological terms, Switzerland, Austria, Sweden, Finland, and Ireland were not uncommitted but a part

of the Western world.¹⁷ Their political and economic systems were based on Western ideas of democracy and capitalism. Furthermore, their trading patterns revealed that they were economically more dependent on the West than the East. Most later joined Western European regional organizations like the Organisation for European Economic Co-operation (OEEC) and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA).¹⁸

During the 1970s and the 1980s, the links between neutrals and the United States did, however, become somewhat weaker when many Europeans criticized strongly US participation in the Vietnam War and, later, President Ronald Reagan's foreign policies.¹⁹ Neutral powers could then represent themselves as supporters of world peace and the joint interests of world community in a divided planet. In short, they occasionally implied that they were in some ways morally superior to the NATO and Warsaw Pact countries.²⁰ Neutrality could also become a part of national identity or self-image, even if it had originally been adopted for pragmatic reasons.²¹

Supporting neutral tendencies in non-communist countries benefited the Soviets if such neutrality weakened the Western alliance.²² The Soviets nevertheless continued to harbor suspicions about the policies of the countries that had actually chosen a neutral path. "In general, it is obvious that the credibility of wartime neutrality by the Western European neutrals is fairly low in Soviet eyes," Hakovirta wrote in 1987.²³ Since then, a substantial amount of previously closed archival sources has become available for research, and from these sources we have learned that the Soviet suspicions were well founded. Sweden provides a case in point. As Mikael Nilsson summarized,

Between 1945 and 1952 the Swedish government tried to combine US demands for solidarity with the West with a credible policy of neutrality. The end result was Swedish consent to American hegemony in Western Europe. Sweden participated in the Marshall Plan, agreed secretly to abide by the CoCom trade embargo, and embarked on an extensive, secret, military cooperation with the US and Britain.²⁴

In short, Sweden became "a trusted ally."²⁵ Another scholar, Simon Moores, has written, that Swedish weapons were pointing East.²⁶ The same was true in the Swiss case,²⁷ and Oliver Rathkolb found evidence that Austria tended to behave like a

“secret ally” of the West, although the country also tried to form links with the Soviet Union.²⁸ Even Finns, who were often believed to be under the thumb of the Soviets, formed secret links with the West during the early Cold War period. The Finnish Security Policy (*Suojelupoliisi*) identified Finnish communists and the Soviet KGB as its main opponents, and cooperated with US and British intelligence agencies in order to contain the communist threat.²⁹ Norwegian intelligence sent Finnish war veterans to the Soviet Union to gather information about the Red Army, while the Americans got photos and information from Finnish officials and soldiers. These links formed the basis for a more extensive exchange of intelligence.³⁰ When the British and US officials spread propaganda to Finland, they found locals eager to help them.³¹

Need to secure “parallel action”

The Americans and, to a lesser degree, their allies believed that it was in the interest of the West to stop the flow of sophisticated new technologies, as well as valuable strategic items like weapons, machine tools, and important raw materials, to the communist countries. The embargo would reduce the growth of the Eastern bloc’s military potential, and hence it was a “necessary adjunct to the build-up of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation,”³² as *The Economist* wrote in 1954. The United States introduced strict controls on its trade with the communist countries in 1948, and in meetings held in Paris in November 1949 and January 1950, the Americans and the European members of NATO (except Iceland) set up a joint export control organization. The system was originally secret and had no official name. Two committees were set up to coordinate the activities of member countries: the Consultative Group and the Coordinating Committee (CoCom). As the first gradually lost its significance, the system as a whole became known simply as the CoCom.

It was understandable that Austria, which was still partly occupied by Soviet troops, and Finland, which was now living under the Soviet shadow, did not join CoCom when the association was set up in 1949–1950. Ireland was only involved in East-West trade to a very limited degree. It was therefore no surprise that these countries were not present at the creation of the multilateral Western export control system.

The Swiss and Swedes were free to join CoCom but refused to do so. International law placed no restrictions on neutrals’ foreign trade, particularly in the case of the

Cold War, which was not a war at all in the formal sense.³³ These legal points were probably not going to impress most foreigners, and both the Swedes and the Swiss argued that membership would be incompatible with their non-aligned and neutrality policies. The latter warned as early as 1949 that “public knowledge [of US-Swiss discussions] would force Swiss government to deny flatly any intention [of] cooperating.”³⁴

CoCom countries recognized that Sweden and Switzerland could effectively undercut the Western export control system. Both had managed to stay out of World War II, were important exporters of industrial goods, and could manufacture many items that the members of the Western alliance were no longer willing to sell to the East. Hence, the CoCom members gave considerable thought to how the neutrals could be persuaded to adopt export controls against the socialist countries.³⁵ There was an “urgent need” to ensure that the Swiss and Swedes would introduce “parallel” controls on East-West trade.³⁶ The representatives of small neutral governments sometimes ridiculed claims that their exports could have substantial impact on the large Soviet economy,³⁷ but the CoCom’s concern was in fact understandable. As Klaus Knorr, a well-known student of international political economy, stated, “Once there are holes in the embargo, futility is a foregone conclusion.”³⁸ The socialist countries knew this well. The Czechoslovakian authorities made considerable efforts during the early 1950s to import via Switzerland and Sweden goods that the socialist countries were no longer allowed to buy directly from CoCom countries.³⁹ In the late 1950s and early 1960s, US officials complained that goods sent to Sweden were redirected to Eastern bloc destinations and approached many Swedish companies to stop them from selling embargoed US electronics to the East.⁴⁰

Sales made by neutral countries could undermine export control policies, but they could also jeopardize the cohesiveness and effectiveness of the Western alliance. European CoCom members were therefore unwilling to include in the export control lists items that the communist countries could buy from alternative suppliers. The US officials recognized that if neutral countries could export strategic items freely to the Soviet Union, it would be hard to ensure that European CoCom countries maintained strict controls on their exports to the communist bloc.⁴¹

Neutral countries depended on American technology and raw materials, and the United States government could use this dependence as a tool to persuade neutrals to participate unofficially in Western export control policies. In October 1950, the Swedes agreed to prevent re-exports of Western strategic goods to the Soviet Union. They also stated that Swedish-made “war materials” were only exported to “traditional” destinations, none of which were located behind the Iron Curtain.

The Americans, however, wanted more: the US government decided to put pressure on the Swedes by limiting and delaying the sales of strategic materials to them. The Swedes gave in, and in June 1951, Walton Butterworth, the US Ambassador to Stockholm, and Dag Hammarskjöld, a State Secretary of the Swedish Cabinet, concluded an unofficial agreement. The Swedes gave general assurances that strategic goods from the US would not be re-exported to East and that sales of Swedish strategic goods to socialist countries would be avoided if possible. The ball bearing maker SKF, which had been a target of direct US pressure, went even further than its competitors in the CoCom countries in its efforts to limit trade with the socialist countries.⁴² These concessions were not meaningless: export control issues became, according to Wilhelm Agrell, “a central component” of bilateral US-Swedish relations,⁴³ while Charles Silva concluded that export control cooperation “became a benchmark for how Sweden could be incorporated into a key area of strategic policy.”⁴⁴

For Switzerland, trade with the socialist countries was of limited importance in economic terms.⁴⁵ However, by trading with them, the Swiss could demonstrate their impartial attitude to the Cold War and their willingness to treat both sides equally.⁴⁶ Following an approach from the CoCom countries, Switzerland nevertheless introduced an effective system of import and re-export control and limited its exports of strategic goods to Eastern Europe to “normal level” (*courant normal*). In practice, this meant that they would not exceed the level of exports in 1949–1950. Therefore, the Swiss agreed not to seize the opportunity to benefit from restrictions imposed by CoCom countries. The British and French governments regarded the Swiss measures as satisfactory, but the US did not. In order to put pressure on the small country, it blocked a large number of Swiss attempts to buy essential goods from the US. The “Americans’ high-handed tactics,” as the British diplomats called them, worked. The

Swiss invited a US delegation to Bern and, following intensive negotiations, a compromise was reached in July. In this Hotz-Linder agreement, an oral “gentlemen’s agreement,” the Swiss agreed to limit further their exports of many strategic goods to an “essential” (*courant essentiel*) level. The Americans could accept this, even if the restrictions were not quite as tight as the ones introduced previously by the CoCom countries.⁴⁷ Switzerland thereby “became a secret member of NATO’s economic warfare system.”⁴⁸

Both the Swedes and Swiss were now partly integrated within the Western export control system, although they could conveniently argue that they still had “autonomous” policies (albeit policies that satisfied CoCom’s wishes);⁴⁹ the latter later claimed that, actually, their neutrality applied only to political and military spheres.⁵⁰

Finland and Austria

Austria and Finland were more difficult cases for Western export control authorities than Sweden or Switzerland. The Swiss and Swedes could, if they were willing to compromise their neutrality, cooperate with the Western alliance, but the Finns and Austrians had less freedom. Up to 1955, Austria was occupied by both Western and Soviet troops, and the latter could undermine the effectiveness of Austrian export control mechanisms.⁵¹ Finland was a neighbor of the Soviet Union and, although it had managed to avoid Soviet occupation during World War II, the Soviets might try again or help Finnish communists to arrange a coup. The Finns also had to ship large war reparations deliveries to the Soviet Union between 1944 and 1952, which formed the basis of extensive commercial trade between the two countries.

On the other hand, strict export control policies toward Finland and Austria could harm their economies, help communists attract more support from local populations, and push these countries closer to the Eastern bloc. A British official therefore concluded that “we should be reluctant to deny to Austria many of the prohibited items as to do so would be contrary to our general policy of building up her economic strength.”⁵² In addition, the British were eager, for commercial reasons, to protect what was a traditionally extensive Anglo-Finnish trade.⁵³

Finland and Austria became targets of the British and the US, and later also of CoCom's export control policies, but the Western regulations concerning them were considerably more relaxed than those concerning trade with the communist countries. The two countries were allowed to buy goods they needed for normal peacetime use, but shipments were tightly scrutinized in order to stop diversion to communist hands. Sales of munitions were mostly prohibited. The CoCom countries underlined their sympathetic attitudes towards Finland and Austria, but because of Finland's "unfortunate geographical and economic position" and the Soviets' occupation of part of Austria, restrictions were deemed necessary.⁵⁴

CoCom countries submitted regular reports of their strategic exports to these countries to the secretariat of the organization.⁵⁵ Communist Yugoslavia, which in 1948 broke away from the Soviet bloc, was treated in the same way as Austria and Finland. In 1951, the leading Western nations of the US, UK, and France mostly eliminated their restrictions of trade with Yugoslavia, because they had adopted a policy of supporting the country against the increasing Soviet military threat.⁵⁶ CoCom's reporting requirements were also abolished in regards to the Balkan country.⁵⁷

Finland and Austria were targets of export control policies, but also cooperated with Western authorities. As early as 1948, US and Austrian authorities jointly set up a system to prevent the sales of strategic goods to communist countries.⁵⁸ The Finns concluded neither official nor unofficial agreements with the Americans. Gunnar Adler-Karlsson believed, erroneously, that the Finnish-Soviet "special relationship ... made any cooperation with the CoCom policy unthinkable."⁵⁹ The US and Finnish documents indicate, however, that the US diplomats who administered export controls formed close relations with key Finnish officials and industrialists and, as a result of these links, the Americans gradually began to trust that the Finns were not re-exporting confidential Western goods or technology to the Eastern bloc.⁶⁰ The Americans reported to the CoCom in early 1950 that they had found "no evidence of diversions" of US strategic goods that had been sold to Finland.⁶¹ In a CoCom meeting in June 1952, the Danes summarized that the Finns and Austrians were both "co-operating in the Committee's controls."⁶²

There were clear similarities between US cooperation with the Austrians on the one hand and with the Finns on the other hand. Export control was based on informal methods.⁶³ Both in Helsinki and in Vienna, there was an American Screening Committee that monitored US shipments to the country in question.⁶⁴ In both countries, a number of officials cooperated unofficially and secretly with the US and British officials who were responsible for the embargo.⁶⁵ For example, in February 1956, the chairman of a Whitehall committee responsible for security controls stated that “during the Occupation we had received a good deal of informal co-operation from the Austrians in preventing the supply of strategic goods to the Soviet zone and the Bloc.”⁶⁶ There was, however, one crucial difference between the small countries: in December 1955, the Austrian government lost its ability to monitor carefully its imports and exports when the country’s trade was liberalized.⁶⁷ In the case of Finland, however, similar liberalization never applied to Finnish-Soviet trade.

The Americans were also concerned about the exports of Finnish-made strategic goods, such as tankers and copper, to the Soviet Union. The Finns cooperated with the Western export control authorities in order to prevent the re-export of Western strategic goods to the Soviet bloc but refused to halt the sales of Finnish-made strategic goods. Many of the items that the Finns sold to the Soviet Union were, however, removed from the CoCom embargo lists in 1954 and 1958; hence, at the end of the 1950s, the Finnish exports no longer undermined the Western embargo in a substantial way.⁶⁸

Why cooperate?

Why did the neutrals cooperate with the Americans? The simple answer was that they had to, because otherwise the Americans would retaliate. If Europeans rejected the US’s demands, the latter could refuse to sell them strategic materials or to give them economic aid.⁶⁹ Yet, this reason is not sufficient to explain all the cooperation, because it does not take into account the fact that many neutrals did see the Soviet Union and communism as threatening forces. For example, E. A. W. Bullock, of the British Foreign Office, recognized that the Swiss were of course determined to protect their trading relations with the West, but he suspected that they were also “genuinely anxious not to help the Russians.”⁷⁰ Research by Till Geiger suggests that, by limiting

exports to the Eastern bloc, Irish politicians could demonstrate their anti-Communist credentials in a cost-effective way.⁷¹

Something similar happened in Finland. The Finns needed US and Western European supplies and technologies and were not willing to endanger their essential trading links with these countries, but Finnish companies had another motive to cooperate with Western powers, as well. The owners and managers of Finnish companies were usually strongly anti-communist. The companies, including many of those that traded extensively with the Soviets, funded anti-communist struggle in Finnish political life, and tried to strengthen Finnish economic and cultural links with the Western world. During the Cold War, they worked hard to project an image of Finland as a democratic market economy to the Western world.⁷² By cooperating with the US and British export control administrations, Finnish industrialists could not only make sure that they received goods and technology, but they also were able to show that they regarded themselves as a part of the Western world, even though Finland could not join the Western alliance. Policymakers in Washington were eager to receive such pro-Western and anti-communist messages. Niklas Stenlås and Mikael Nilsson have suggested that the Western embargo policy could be seen as “a touchstone which could be used to probe the alignment of hesitant or refractory countries such as Sweden and Switzerland.”⁷³

The Irish did not have to pay high price for their strict attitude on East-West trade, because the country's trade with socialist countries was already very limited.⁷⁴ Finnish trade with the communist countries was, in contrast, extensive, as the latter bought a quarter or a fifth of Finland's exports during the early part of the Cold War. The trade was not only extensive, but also particularly profitable for Finnish companies.⁷⁵ Nevertheless, the Finns often had an economic motive to comply with the Western re-export regulations. They had to ensure that the goods sold to the Soviet Union by Finland did not contain too many Western components. Finland had to pay for these components with hard currencies but itself received payment from the Soviet Union in inconvertible clearing rubles. Extensive use of Western items would therefore cause balance of payments problems for Finland.⁷⁶

Disadvantages and advantages of neutrality

The Western alliance had introduced the embargo in order to minimize the Soviet threat to their security. The neutral countries mostly saw the issue differently. At least to some of them, the strategic embargo was not an East-West problem, but rather a West-West problem.⁷⁷ In other words, the threat that provoked the neutral countries to limit their exports of strategic goods did not always come from Soviet Union, but sometimes from the West – in particular, from the US.⁷⁸ The neutral countries were concerned that the US and its allies would use economic sanctions against them or force them to adopt policies that undermined their efforts to stay out of the global confrontation between the Western and Eastern alliances.

Although the Americans were eager to stop the flow of strategic materials to the East, they were not trying to force neutral countries to become full members in the Western embargo. As Birgit Karlsson concluded, for “the USA the *contents* of policy were more important than the form it was given in, while for Sweden the opposite was the case.”⁷⁹ The informality of the arrangements between the US and the neutrals gave the latter a chance to claim that they had not diverted from the policy of neutrality, while in practice they had done just that. Swedish companies were instructed to refuse to sell items on CoCom lists to the communist countries unless the Swedish government approved these deals. If the order was rejected, the companies were told not to disclose the real reason to their potential customers, but instead claim that they lacked necessary production capacity or raw materials.⁸⁰

Informal cooperation with the Americans had some disadvantages. As neutral countries were not formally members of CoCom, they had to continuously prove that they could be trusted. As a result, they could even become “more Catholic than the Pope,” as the Polish concluded when they failed to buy ball bearings from Sweden but got them from NATO countries instead.⁸¹ CoCom members often defended their interests against US demands. One such country was Denmark. According to Karlsson, the “Danish example seems to imply that it was possible to combine formal adherence to CoCom with a relatively independent trade policy, whereas Swedish formal independence was combined with extensive concessions in practice.”⁸²

Furthermore, since each neutral country negotiated independently with the US government, they could not get support from other neutrals that were facing similar pressure. In contrast, small CoCom countries could join forces with each other in

order to block US initiatives that they opposed.⁸³ The Swiss and Swedes consulted each other,⁸⁴ but the neutrals did not form a wider bloc, even though such extensive cooperation could have strengthened their bargaining position vis-à-vis the US. The Swedes even sent reports to the CoCom of their exports of strategic goods to Finland.⁸⁵ Building a “third bloc” was probably an alien idea to countries underlining their neutrality or non-aligned status, but such a cooperation could have brought benefits. Thomas Fischer has studied the role of “N+N states” in the process that led to the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe in 1975. In this case, the ability of neutral and non-aligned countries, for the first time, to build a “third force” helped to change their position “from objects to subjects in European Cold War affairs.”⁸⁶

There was, however, some Nordic cooperation in the field of export controls. The Danes and Norwegians were members of CoCom and supplied information about its internal discussions to the Swedes.⁸⁷ In 1951, the Danes resisted attempts to put pressure on Sweden and Switzerland.⁸⁸ The Norwegians and Danes also jointly opposed restrictions on Western trade with Finland,⁸⁹ and later tried to have the reporting requirements concerning Finland abolished.⁹⁰

Politically, the neutrals had “sinned.” But did this matter economically? A group of scholars have argued that they nevertheless become “path-breakers in building East-West contacts.”⁹¹ During the Korean War (1950–1953), when relations between the Western and Eastern blocs were tense, the neutrals sold roughly half of all goods exported by non-communist countries to socialist countries in Europe. At the end of the decade, the market share of the neutrals was still close to 40 percent. These figures reflect, to a large degree, an overall decline in East-West trade, but they nevertheless indicate that the neutrals could protect their trade interests in the socialist countries better than the CoCom countries. How was this possible? There are two key reasons. First, as the neutral countries were not full members, their export restrictions were more relaxed than those of full CoCom members. Second, communist countries seemed to feel that small neutral countries were, to some degree, less dangerous trading partners than other capitalist states.⁹²

However, we have to recognize that neutrality itself did not automatically make a country an intermediary in the Cold War: the Swiss had relatively little interest in

trade with the socialist countries, and the Irish even less. The Swiss could show that the Hotz-Linder agreement had only a small impact on the country's foreign trade, except in the case of machine exports, which suffered. A fear of US countermeasures, but also the increasingly complicated Soviet foreign trade bureaucracy, the communists' striving for autarky, and lack of interest in Eastern European products encouraged Swiss traders to divert their business to non-communist countries. Swiss trade with the Soviet Union had been declining since 1949 and, in 1952, essential quotas were filled only partly. In September 1954, following relaxation of the general CoCom embargo, the Swiss Federal Council terminated the Hotz-Linder agreement, but continued to restrict trade – too strictly, according to the Soviets.⁹³ Austria, however, had a strong interest in trading with other parts of the former Habsburg Empire, while the large war reparations shipments formed the basis of Finnish-Soviet trade, which was also seen as a symbol of new postwar “friendship” between the two countries.

Conclusions

If the establishment of CoCom is analyzed as “a test” for European neutrals, it is clear that they failed it. In the 1950s, each of these countries cooperated with the Western alliance in the latter's efforts to limit strategic exports from non-communist countries to the Soviet bloc. Some of the officials and companies of the neutral countries shared the desire of CoCom to limit the flow of military useful goods to the East, while others tried to maintain the appearance of neutrality even though there was a lot of practical cooperation between CoCom and uncommitted countries. This cooperation was often based on informal links and agreements, which shows how important it is to look at low-level interaction instead of focusing on “high politics” and public statements.

In his recent study on Finnish security police (*Suojelupoliisi*), Kimmo Rentola concluded that there was little room for neutrality in Cold War intelligence activities.⁹⁴ The same could be said about the field of export controls. If neutral countries continued to sell communist countries items embargoed by the Western alliance, this trade helped the Soviet Union and its allies to undermine the embargo. If, on the other hand, the neutrals stopped this trade, they participated in the efforts of the Western alliance to weaken the military and economic potential of the communist

countries. We know now that, in most cases, the neutrals chose the latter option regardless of whether it was compatible with the declared guidelines of their neutrality policy.

All neutrals, including the ones located closest to the Soviet bloc, were living in the “American century.”⁹⁵ None of the countries – not even front-line ones like Austria and Finland – could resist US demands for cooperation. Some of their policymakers and industrialists did not even want to try. During previous conflicts, neutral countries had often reaped economic benefits from their uncommitted status. During the early Cold War, however, the US was economically strong enough to limit, although not totally eliminate, such benefits.

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Notes

1 The chapter does not discuss the role of mini-states like Liechtenstein. We will also ignore Spain, which joined NATO and CoCom in the 1980s, but had close military links with the USA already in the 1950s.

2 Hakovirta 1988, 7.

3 Mastanduno 1992, 5.

4 Sundelius 1990, 207.

5 Hakovirta 1988, 2.

6 For a convenient summary of the characteristics of these countries, see Fischer 2009, 32–55.

7 Geiger 2009.

8 In fact, as we will see, this had a clear negative impact on their ability to defend themselves against US pressure.

9 Adler-Karlsson 1968.

10 For a long time, there was so little information available on CoCom that, although Adler-Karlsson's book was highly critical on CoCom, a British diplomat in charge of export control issues recommended it as useful reading when a British ambassador asked for information on the organization. National Archives, Kew, London (NA). FCO69/558. Minute by T. J. Alexander, 27 February 1975.

11 Karlsson 1992, 1995; Nilsson 2007, 2009; Nilsson 2010; Nilsson and Wyss 2016.

12 Schaller 1987; Ammann 2005.

13 Geiger 2008.

14 Jensen-Eriksen 2011, 2013.

15 Roodbeen 1992.

16 Hakovirta 1988, 52–53.

17 For example, Fischer 2009, 31.

18 For example, Enderle-Burcel et al. 2009, 2; Rathkolb 2009, 17.

19 Zakheim 1998, 124; Sundelius 1987, 15.

20 Sundelius 1987, 15–16.

21 Rainio-Niemi 2014.

22 Zubok 2009, 110.

23 Hakovirta 1987, 201.

24 Nilsson 2009, 273.

25 Nilsson 2010, 291.

26 Moores 2002, 29.

27 Wyss 2012.

28 Rathkolb 2009, 18.

29 Rentola 2009, 20–24, 28, 78.

30 Rislakki 2011; Heikka 2005, 107.

31 Fields 2015.

32 "Butter for Soviet Guns". *The Economist*, 23 January 1954.

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33 Aalders 2009, 60; Karlsson 1992, 130.

34 Foreign Relations of United States 1949, volume V, p. 68: The Minister in Switzerland (Vincent) to the Acting Secretary of State, 19 January 1949.

35 See, for example, NA. FO371/87193. UR3424/13. Telegram no. 423 from Hall-Patch, Paris, to Foreign Office (FO), 3 June 1950; FO371/87195. UR3424/55. A minute by E. A. W. Bullock, 1 December 1950; UR3424/57. "Report of the Subcommittee on the question of Sweden and Switzerland." CoCom Doc. 176, 26 October 1950; FO371/94288. M3415719. "Meeting of the Consultative Group 16 January 1950." CoCom Document no. 258B; Ministère des Affaires Étrangères. Archives diplomatiques, La Courneuve. CoCom Archives (hereafter MAE. CoCom). Early miscellaneous documents, File 21. CoCom doc 303: "Report of the Coordinating Committee on the UK statement on Sweden and Switzerland and Subsequent Decisions," 9 March 1951.

36 MAE. CoCom. Early miscellaneous documents, File 21. CoCom doc 303: "Report of the Coordinating Committee on the UK statement on Sweden and Switzerland and subsequent decisions," 9 March 1951.

37 See, for example, Nilsson 2009, 278.

38 Knorr 1975, 146.

39 Brom and Kubû 2009, 168, 175–176, 184.

40 MAE. CoCom. File 658. CoCom Document 3965. Memorandum from the United States Delegation on non-member country cooperation and relations – Sweden. Subcommittee on export controls, 22 April 1960; CoCom Document 4620: A US memorandum on the same topic, 21 September 1961.

41 Mastanduno 1992, 19, 21.

42 Karlsson 1992, 171–181, 188–189; MAE. CoCom. Early miscellaneous documents, File 21. CoCom doc 303: “Report of the Coordinating Committee on the UK statement on Sweden and Switzerland and subsequent decisions,” 9 March 1951; Riksarkivet, Stockholm. Utrikesdepartementet 1920 års dossiersystem. HP 65 Ea, File 3109. A memo by Sverker Åström, 31 July 1951, and the attached memos; HP 64 Ea, File 2684. Telegram from Swedish Cabinet to Embassies in London, Paris and Washington, 28 January 1951.

43 Agrell 2000, 199.

44 Silva 1999, 317; See also Nilsson 2010, 290, 292, 297.

45 Ammann 2005, 119–120.

46 Lohm and Fritzsche 2009, 26.

47 The classic study on this agreement is Schaller 1987; See also Ammann 2005, 126–127; Roodbeen 1992, 236–243; Lohm and Fritzsche 2009, 31–33; NA. DEFE10/254. J.W.P.C.(SX)/P(51)27. Copy of a letter from U.K. Delegation to O.E.E.C. to Foreign Office dated 16th February, 1951” (quote); The agreement received its name from Harold F. Linder, US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Economic Affairs and Jean Hotz, Director of the Swiss Division of Commerce.

48 Gabriel 1998, 19.

49 Riksarkivet, Stockholm. Utrikesdepartementet 1920 års dossiersystem. HP 64 Ea, File 2685. Telegram from Swedish Cabinet, to Embassy in Washington, 7 June 1951; Silva 1999, 314; Karlsson 1992, 178; NA. FO371/111295. M3423/12. L.H. Lamb, Berne, to J. E. Coulson, FO, 27 October 1954.

50 Vogel 1987, 105.

51 NA. FO371/87186. UR348/1. “Paris (U.K. Delegation) Tel. No. 32”. C.B. Duke, 11 January 1950.

52 NA. FO371/87186. UR348/1. “Paris (U.K. Delegation) Tel. No. 32”. C.B. Duke, 11 January 1950.

53 NA. FO371/87186. UR348/4. “East/West Trade. Note for the U.K. Delegate” 5 January 1950.

54 NA. FO371/87193. UR3424/10. “Report of Coordinating Committee on Exports to Austria and Finland,” 12 May 1950; FO371/100223. M3410/2. CoCom Doc. 553: Coordinating Committee. Record of Discussion, 6 December 1951 (quote) and annexes to this document; DEFE10/395. J.W.P.S.(W.P.)/P(50)49. Briefs for the UK

representative on security controls on exports to Austria and Finland, 1 May 1950; Hanhimäki 1997, 60–61.

55 MAE. CoCom. Early miscellaneous documents, File 19. V. Price, UK Delegation, Paris, to G. d'Orlandi, Chairman of the CoCom, 28 August 1950; See also, for example, the reports in Early miscellaneous documents, Files 18–20 and 22, and CoCom Secretariat Papers, File 14, Paper No. 78: “Exports to Finland of List I and List II items and items of the Munitions and Atomic Lists During the first half of 1955.”

56 MAE. CoCom. Early miscellaneous documents, File 20. Doc. 231. “Statement by United Kingdom on Export Policy to Yugoslavia”; CoCom Doc 268: “Statement of U.S. Export Policy Toward Yugoslavia,” 6 February 1951; File 22. CoCom Doc. 347B. “Declaration by the French Delegate on policy regarding exports to Yugoslavia,” 5 April 1951; Mehta 2011, 125.

57 MAE. CoCom. Early miscellaneous documents, File 20. CoCom Document 785. “Report of the Coordinating Committee to the Consultative Group Covering the Period July 20th 1951–June 17th 1952”.

58 Rathkolb 2009, 12–13.

59 Adler-Karlsson 1968, 58. He did suspect that they may have been a “secret transshipment agreement” between Finland and the Western countries, but believed that even this was “doubtful.”

60 Jensen-Eriksen 2011.

61 MAE. CoCom. Early miscellaneous documents, File 22. CoCom Doc. 306: “Control Over Reexports and Transit Trade in Finland,” U.S. Delegation [1951].

62 MAE. CoCom. Early miscellaneous documents, File 30. CoCom Doc. 787: Record of Discussion, 10 June 1952.

63 Roodbeen 1992, 296; NARA. SD. RG59. Decimal Files on Finland 1950–1954, box 2120. 460E.119/8-2251. “Memorandum of Discussion with Foreign Ministry officials on application of U.S. export controls and allocation procedures to Finland,” W. Barnes, 22 August 1951.

64 Roodbeen 1992, 289.

65 Stankovsky and Roodbeen 1991, 73–74; MAE. CoCom. Early miscellaneous documents, File 21. CoCom doc 280. Report of the Coordinating Committee on the question of Third Countries (i.e., non-participating countries) 16 February 1951; File

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22. CoCom doc. 313: "Report of the Coordinating Committee on the U.S. Proposal on Austria," 13 March 1951.
- 66 NA. DEFE10/340. Security Export Controls Working Party, SX/M(56)1, 2 February, 1956. The Chairman was H. Gresswell from the Ministry of Defence.
- 67 Roodbeen 1992, 299.
- 68 Jensen-Eriksen 2011.
- 69 Roodbeen 1992, 5; Lohm and Fritzsche 2009, 32.
- 70 NA. FO371/87195. UR3424/55. A minute by E.A.W. Bullock, 1 December 1950; see also FO371/87194. UR3424/36. Telegram no. 242 from Scrivener, Bern, to FO, 23 October 1950.
- 71 Geiger 2008, 124.
- 72 Vesikansa 2004; Jensen-Eriksen 2007, 84–85, 87–88, 99–100, 110–111.
- 73 Stenlås and Nilsson 2005, 151.
- 74 Geiger 2008, 122, 124.
- 75 Viita 2006, 39.
- 76 Sutela 2005, 4.
- 77 Stankovsky and Roodbeen 1991, 72.
- 78 Roodbeen 1992, 246; Agrell 2000, 199.
- 79 Karlsson 1995, 45.
- 80 Karlsson 1995, 45; Nilsson 2007, 191.
- 81 Nilsson 2009, 281 (quote), 283; Nilsson 2007, 253–254.
- 82 Karlsson 1992, 256.
- 83 Førland 1994, 178.
- 84 Riksarkivet. HP 64 Ea, File 2683. Erik von Sydow, Paris, to Dag Hammarskjöld, Utrikesdepartementet, 9 January 1950; HP 64 Ea, File 2684. Telegram from Swedish Cabinet to Bern, 15 January 1951; Karlsson 1992, 170.
- 85 Riksarkivet. HP 64 Ea, File 2685. "Revised International Lists 1952. Export Licenses granted to Finland in October 1952; "Revised International Lists 1951. Export Licenses granted to Finland in February 1952." The fact that these reports were written in English suggests that they were sent to the West. Some of the lists can also be found from US archives. NARA. SD. RG59. Decimal Files on Finland 1950–1954, box 2119. 460C.589/1-2753. DuWayne G. Clark, Stockholm, to State Department, 27 January 1953. The Swedes agreed in 1951 to give British information

about the exports of strategic goods to Eastern Europe. This may have included Finland; Nilson 1991, 56.

86 Fischer 2009, 18.

87 Riksarkivet, Stockholm; Utrikesdepartementet 1920 års dossiersystem. HP 64 Ea, File 2685. Erik von Sydow, Paris, to Sverker Åström, Utrikesdepartementet, 28 June 1951.

88 NA. FO371/94288. M3415/19. “East/West Trade,” A British record of the Consultative Group meeting on 16 January 1951.

89 NA. FO371/87186. UR348/6. E. Hall-Patch, Paris, to Ernest Bevin, 26 January 1950.

90 MAE. CoCom. Early miscellaneous documents, File 30. CoCom Doc. 787: Record of Discussion, 10 June 1952.

91 Enderle-Burcel et al. 2009, 1.

92 Komlosy 2009, 115.

93 Lohm and Fritzsche 2009, 32–33.

94 Rentola 2009, 45, 159.

95 Compare with Gabriel 1998.